

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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TO: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers

FROM: Lori Hutchinson, Vaccine Coordinator
Montana Immunization Program

DATE: February 3, 2011

SUBJECT: Policy on the Use of Dormitory-Style Storage Units for VFC Vaccine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has long discouraged the use of dormitory-style storage units for storing VFC vaccine. A dormitory-style (also called "bar-style") storage unit is a combined refrigerator/freezer where the freezer is housed inside the refrigerator and both are accessed by one external door. Please note that the term "dormitory-style" does not refer to the size of the unit. It refers to the location of the freezer inside the refrigerator. Studies have shown that these units cannot reliably hold vaccine storage temperatures.

With this month's update of the *Vaccines for Children (VFC) Operations Guide*, the CDC has further clarified the policy on using these units in the VFC program. The Montana Immunization Program has adopted these policies as described below:

- Beginning with the 2011 re-enrollment, which occurs in April, VFC providers are prohibited from using dormitory-style storage units for permanent storage of VFC vaccine.
- Permanent storage is defined as having more than one day's supply of vaccine for longer than one daily work shift (12 hours).
- The practice of using dormitory-style units for *temporary* storage of VFC vaccine is allowed for those providers already using the units in this capacity (as of February 1, 2011) as long as certain requirements are met.
- Temporary storage is defined as that where only one day's supply of vaccine is stored for one work day (no more than 12 hours). Vaccine is returned to permanent storage at the end of the day.
- Providers wishing to continue to use dormitory-style units for temporary storage of VFC vaccine must agree to certain requirements and get written approval from the Montana Immunization Program.

Complying with this Policy

- 1) If you currently do not store VFC vaccine in dormitory-style storage units at your facility, you comply with the new policy. No action is required.

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- 2) When procuring new storage units for VFC vaccine, *do not buy dormitory-style units*.
- 3) If you currently use a dormitory-style unit for permanent storage of VFC vaccine (as defined above), you must replace the unit prior to re-enrolling in the VFC program in April.
- 4) If, as of February 1, 2011, you currently use a dormitory-style unit for *temporary* storage of VFC vaccine (as defined above) and wish to continue this practice, contact the Montana Immunization Program for a list of additional requirements. If you agree to follow these requirements, you will be issued written approval to use your dormitory-style units. If you do not agree to the additional requirements, you will be required to replace the units.
- 5) See the attached *Refrigerator/Freezer Guide to Vaccine Storage* for guidance on purchasing and setting up vaccine storage units. It can also be found at www.immunization.mt.gov under the VFC link.
- 6) Please note that when signing the VFC Provider Agreement this April, you are agreeing to abide by this policy, and we will assess compliance during our site visits.

If you have any questions, please contact Lori Hutchinson at the Montana Immunization Program at 444-0277 or lhutchinson@mt.gov.